

CDA Credentialing Decision Process Enhancement FAQ

1. What is changing in the Child Development Associate® (CDA), credentialing process?

The Council will soon enhance the CDA® credentialing decision process to recognize competence more efficiently. We will no longer require a verification visit for candidates who demonstrate a qualifying level of competence on the CDA® exam. This expedited decision process ensures that we have a valid basis for awarding the credential, while reducing unneeded steps for candidates who have already shown their competence.

2. How will we know which candidates qualify for an expedited decision?

Candidates who demonstrate a qualifying level of competence on the CDA® exam will be eligible for an expedited credentialing decision that doesn't require feedback from a verification visit. The Council will make this decision based on objective, consistent, and reliable evidence and data.

3. Will every candidate still have a verification visit?

No. Under the enhanced process, some candidates will not complete a verification visit because their CDA® exam performance, when considered alongside the full set of CDA requirements, including training, work experience, and the professional portfolio, already provides sufficient evidence of competence.

Candidates who do not reach the qualifying level on the exam will continue to complete the full process, including the verification visit, before a credentialing decision is made.

4. Does this change mean the verification visit is being eliminated or is less important?

No. The verification visit remains a key part of the CDA process for many candidates. It offers valuable opportunities for professional reflection, feedback, and dialogue. However, the Council recognizes that in some cases, competence is already clearly demonstrated through other validated evidence. In those instances, a verification visit is no longer required to make a confident credentialing decision.

5. Will this change the workload of PD Specialists or the compensation they receive from the Council?

The Council will continue to engage PD Specialists for verification visits when candidates need them. The number of visits that PD Specialists conduct may decline due to this enhancement, but that doesn't diminish the value of their role. PD Specialists will remain essential, especially for supporting candidates who benefit from observation, dialogue, and feedback.

6. What data supports this decision?

This enhancement is grounded in comprehensive evidence showing that performance on the CDA[®] exam is a valid and reliable indicator of ECE professional competence when considered alongside the full set of CDA requirements, including training, work experience, and the professional portfolio. Using this evidence responsibly allows the Council to make timely and confident credentialing decisions while maintaining integrity, consistency, and objectivity.

The specific performance criteria are part of the Council's proprietary credentialing framework, which is informed by best practices in the field.

7. How do we ensure decisions remain accurate and consistent if some candidates don't have a visit?

Every credentialing decision continues to be based on multiple sources of validated evidence. For some candidates, the CDA[®] exam, alongside the full set of CDA requirements, including training, work experience, and the professional portfolio, provides the critical information needed for the Council to make a credentialing decision. For others, the verification visit adds needed support for the Council's decision to award candidate's a CDA. Not all cases are the same, but the Council will apply the same degree of objectivity and rigor to ascertain competence in early childhood education.

This approach ensures that all decisions are made with the same level of **objectivity, rigor, and confidence**, using only the evidence necessary to confirm competence.

8. Will this create a two-tier system or perception of inequity among candidates?

No. The CDA credential remains the same. So do the high standards that all candidates must reach to earn a CDA. The difference lies only in the path used to demonstrate competence, not in the credential or in its meaning.

All CDA credentials stand for the same level of professional achievement and deserve the same recognition.

9. Will the CDA remain as rigorous and respected as before?

Absolutely. The CDA's standards, competencies, and reputation will remain unchanged. The enhancement strengthens the credibility of the CDA by ensuring that the Council makes its credentialing decisions in a more efficient way. The CDA continues to be the most trusted and respected credential in early childhood education.

10. Will this change affect how states, higher education institutions or employers recognize the CDA?

No. The CDA credential continues to hold the same value and recognition. The enhancement affects only the decision-making process, not the credential itself. There should be no changes to articulation agreements, state recognition, or employer validation.

11. How does this enhancement support equity and access?

This improvement reduces unneeded delays for qualified candidates while maintaining consistent and equitable evaluation of all. The Council uses validated measures to ensure an objective and consistent evaluation of all educators, regardless of their background or pathway to the CDA.

12. How will the Council monitor and evaluate this change?

The Council will continue to review data and outcomes regularly to ensure the process remains objective, consistent, and valid. We will maintain our longstanding commitment to excellence and integrity by conducting quality assurance audits and analysis to guide ongoing improvement in the decision-making process.

13. Does this change lower the standard for earning the CDA?

No. The standard of competence required to earn the CDA remains exactly the same. The enhancement simply reduces unneeded delays when a candidate has shown the level of competence required to hold a CDA. This change strengthens, not weakens, the CDA by streamlining how the Council can acknowledge proof of competence in early childhood education.

14. What is the goal of this enhancement?

The upcoming enhancement is another step in the Council's enduring goal to combine excellence with efficiency in the credentialing process. The CDA continues to reflect the Council's national standards in early childhood education, and this improvement ensures prompt, consistent recognition of competence in early childhood education.

15. Will this apply to the Home Visitor CDA credential setting?

No. The Home Visitor CDA credential setting will continue to follow its current process. Home Visitor candidates will not be required to upload their professional portfolio in the system, and their portfolios will still be reviewed onsite by a PD Specialist due to the credential's unique requirements.